

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER “A” 2020

The other day I read about a Bishop who was celebrating Sunday Mass at one of the parishes in his diocese on the Feast of the Holy Trinity. During the homily, the Bishop asked the congregation, “*Who can tell me whose Feast we celebrate today?*”

A young boy raised his hand and answered, “*Your Excellency, today is the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity.*”

The Bishop said, “*Very good! And can you also tell me who the Most Holy Trinity is?*”

And the young boy answered, “*Yes, I can, Your Excellency. The Most Holy Trinity is the Father, the Son and the Parakeet.*”

Obviously, that young boy misheard the word *Paraclete*—a title that is used often for the Holy Spirit—and he said the word *Parakeet*.

That young boy is not alone. A lot of people have not heard clearly or correctly about the person and work of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. Even though we will hear more about the Holy Spirit in a couple of weeks on the Feast of Pentecost, it would be helpful for us to reflect on the meaning of Jesus’ words in the Gospel today: “*I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to be with you always.*”

According to Jesus’ words, the Father will give us another Advocate, referring to the Holy Spirit.

That begs the question—who is the original Advocate? Of course, it's Jesus! While He was on earth, Jesus was the first Paraclete. Like a good lawyer, Jesus defended His disciples against all opposition—the scoffers, the unbelievers, the hypocrites, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Sanhedrin. But, Jesus' role in salvation history as the first Advocate was completed at His Death and Resurrection when He saved the world from sin and death.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the Father sent another Advocate who would be with the Apostles and all Christians to the end of the world. And the work of the Holy Spirit, this other Advocate, was and continues to be the completion of the salvation of the world through the Church that Jesus founded.

Jesus called the Holy Spirit an *advocate*. In the original Greek text, the word is *paracletos*. *Paracletos* can be translated as paraclete, advocate, counselor, defender, or helper. A more modern word would be a lawyer.

We love to tell lots of jokes about lawyers, but, when we are in trouble with the law, having a good lawyer is really important. And, as Jesus told us, that's the role of the Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit is our personal attorney, especially in times of trouble.

In law and in the courtroom, a lawyer can play one of two roles. A lawyer can be the prosecutor or a lawyer can act in the role of a defender—a defense lawyer. The Holy Spirit plays both roles in our lives.

As a prosecutor, the Holy Spirit comes to us to *convict* us when we sin and fall short of what God requires. Ever had a pang of conscience? That is the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen once said, “*The only way to dislodge sin from one’s life is through the expulsive force of a new love. This is the role of the Advocate. He is the Love of God who is poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5) who drives out unlovely loves. He is the Lord and Giver of true life who makes utterly clear that so many other things that we regarded as ‘life’ are really death warmed over.*”

So, in the role of prosecutor, the Holy Spirit will nudge our conscience to get us to repent and reconcile ourselves to God, especially through the Sacrament of Confession. Maybe some of us here need to pray to the Holy Spirit and ask the Spirit to play the role of prosecutor—to enlighten us to know our sins, to move us to be sorry for our sins, and to give us the power to repent of them.

As a prosecutor, the Holy Spirit—the Paraclete—also *convicts* us of God’s truth. On television, I am sure you have seen the commercial with Mike Lindell advertising his famous “*My Pillow*”—the best pillows on the market. By the way, “*My Pillow*” is excellent—someone gave me one as a gift this past Christmas. What I didn’t know until recently is that Mike Lindell once was a hopeless crack addict. He just published a book titled “*What Are the Odds—From Crack Addict to CEO.*” This autobiography recounts how he overcame his addictions and troubles to build one of America’s most successful brands. Do you know how it happened? You

guessed it, in his own words, it was the power of the Holy Spirit that convicted him of his sins, freed him from the slavery of sin, and unleashed a new power in him to turn his entire life around. Maybe some of us here need to ask the Holy Spirit to convict us of God's truth that God not only can free us from slavery to sin, but can give us a whole new life.

The Paraclete also acts as a defense lawyer, who stands beside us and defends us against Satan. The devil constantly is seeking to isolate us from God and other people by sin. When we do sin, the devil works on us, trying to convince us that we have no hope, constantly saying, "*You've really blown it. You're no good! Do you think God or anybody else want anything to do with you?*"

Once we are isolated from God and others, we are at the mercy of the other forces around us—most of them bad for us. That's why Jesus said He will not leave us *orphans* in this world, but that He would send to us the Holy Spirit, our advocate and defender.

An orphan is one of the most vulnerable people in the world. Without family to protect and nurture him, an orphan is at the mercy of the world. Orphans also have a difficult time developing intimacy and relationships with other people because they struggle with the issues of identity, a sense of worth, and a sense of belonging.

Spiritual orphans have the same problems. They feel alone in this world. They have a difficult time believing that they are loveable. In turn, they have a difficult time having a personal

relationship with Jesus and others. And because they do not feel or believe they are loveable, they have a very difficult time obeying Jesus' command to love—all because they themselves have never felt that deep sense of worth, safety, love and belonging that comes when raised in a good family.

But just imagine if you were an orphan child and someone like Jeff Bezos, owner of Amazon—one of the richest men in the world—adopted you into his family—and you went from a place of utter poverty, isolation and vulnerability to being someone who is loved, protected, nurtured and blessed with every resource. It would be mind blowing.

Well, brothers and sisters, at our Baptism, something more incredible, more remarkable happened to us. The Holy Spirit came upon us, just as the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, and we were born again. We became new creations. Original sin was washed away. God came to live within us. And ever since that moment, the Holy Spirit has been unfolding the saving grace of Jesus within our hearts.

At our Baptism, we became children of God and members of God's family. And as members of God's family, the Spirit has showered upon us every gift that Jesus gave his family, the Church—the fullness of the truth found in Tradition and Scriptures, the seven Sacraments, the infallible voice of the Church, and the support and love of the Church that includes the Communion of Saints.

Maybe some of us here need to pray to the Holy Spirit to be our Paraclete—both our prosecutor and our defense lawyer. Maybe

we have to pray for the inspired awareness that we are beloved children of God, that nothing is too sinful that God cannot forgive, that all we need to do is to humbly ask. Maybe some of us need to pray for the personal revelation that, as God's children and members of God's family, the Church, we have received every spiritual blessing, and then begin to share them with God and others in love.

I don't know if a lot of people are like that little boy who misheard the word *Paraclete*—a title that is used often for the Holy Spirit—and used the word *parakeet*. But I do know that a lot of people do not know the explosive power and blessings that the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, our divine lawyer can bring us. That's why I would like you quietly to join me as I pray:

Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life, I surrender to You. Please come now and create in me a clean heart. Renew my spirit, so that I may hunger and thirst for righteousness, and not after the things of this world. Tomorrow will come, and I will face temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Help me not to fear, but to remember that I am never alone. You are my advocate and defender.

Help me to know that I am a beloved child of God and a member of God's family. Always remind me how blessed I am and that You are within me to teach me how to love God and others with all my body, mind, heart and soul. Fill me with Your holy presence and mighty power so that I may walk in a manner worthy of my calling for I am Yours alone. Amen.